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THIRD REPORT OF THE

PORTS EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

TO THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT
AND CIVIL AVIATION

LONDON
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
1956

NINEPENCE NET

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

Sir Ernest Murrant, K.C.M.G., M.B.E. (*Chairman*)
Sir Leslie Ford, O.B.E.
Sir Robert Letch
Sir Eric Millbourn, C.M.G.
Mr. M. Arnet Robinson
Mr. Tom Yates, C.B.E.

Mr. R. R. Goodison (*Secretary*)

PORTS EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

THIRD REPORT

To The Rt. Hon. HAROLD WATKINSON, M.P.,

Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation.

SIR,

Our Committee was established in March, 1952, with the following terms of reference :

> " To investigate the working of the ports of the United Kingdom, and in particular the ports of London and Liverpool and to secure the co-operation of all the interests concerned, including shipping and inland transport authorities, in ensuring a quicker flow through the ports of inward and outward cargo ; and to report from time to time."

2. We have previously submitted two reports, the last in August, 1952. In that report we said that we proposed to remain in being as a Committee, so that we should be available if required either by the Government or by any of the Port Operations Panels which we had set up at the ports. Since the submission of our second report there have been a number of changes in the membership of the Committee. In 1953 Sir Ernest Murrant took over the Chairmanship from Lord Llewellin who resigned on his appointment as Governor General of the Central African Federation, and in the same year Major Roland Thornton was obliged by ill health to resign from membership of the Committee. He was succeeded on the Committee by Mr. M. Arnet Robinson, Managing Director of Coast Lines Limited, and then Deputy Chairman (now Chairman) of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. In 1955 Sir Douglas Ritchie resigned from the Committee on grounds of ill health and Mr. F. A. Pope resigned on ceasing to be a full-time member of the British Transport Commission. The following new members were appointed to the Committee :

Sir Robert Letch	General Manager of the Docks Division of the British Transport Commission, and Chairman of their Docks Board of Management.
Sir Eric Millbourn, C.M.G.	Hon. Adviser to the Minister on Shipping in Port.
Sir Leslie Ford, O.B.E.	General Manager of the Port of London Authority.

3. We met on various occasions between November, 1952, and January, 1954, and again in November, 1955, when we considered a letter, dated the 26th September, 1955, which had been received from the Road Haulage Association Limited, about delays to road vehicles engaged in the carriage of goods to and from docks. This letter is reproduced at Appendix I to this report. You subsequently also brought to our notice the report dated the 8th November, 1955, by the London Chamber of Commerce on the Working of the London Docks. That report contained references to the problem of delays to road vehicles bringing goods to the docks.

4. We instituted a number of enquiries and collected statistics with a view to assessing the measure of the delays and ascertaining their causes. We have now completed our examination and submit our report. We have confined ourselves to the problem as it affects road transport within the docks. We have not attempted to deal with road access to the ports, which we believe to be a separate matter, though we have received details of many proposed schemes of highway development which will facilitate the movement of road vehicles while in transit to and from the ports.

5. Although this present report is restricted to the question of delays to road vehicles, we have taken the opportunity of reviewing the developments which have taken place in the matters to which we drew attention in our first and second reports and we submit at Appendix II a note on these matters.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

6. The procedure for dealing with cargo in the docks varies between one port and another. Each port therefore needs separate consideration. Our present enquiries have been concentrated upon five ports to which particular reference has been made, viz. London, Liverpool (and Birkenhead), Manchester, Glasgow and Southampton. We report upon each of those ports separately, but one factor which is common to all of them is the very large amount of work, involving heavy capital expenditure, that has been and is being done by the port authorities to improve their facilities. This work has been carried out, concurrently with the repair of war damage and with the overtaking of maintenance which fell into arrears during the war, during a period of stringency of materials and labour, and financial restrictions. In London and Liverpool a significant feature is the increase in the post-war years, in the total volume of export traffic passing through the port and the much greater proportion of that traffic which is road-borne.

7. Our enquiries have shown that delays are in the main limited to road vehicles loaded with general export cargoes, particularly though not exclusively those consigned to deep-sea ships bound for distant destinations.

8. Whilst not in any way minimising the cost and wastefulness involved it is probable that some congestion is unavoidable in certain circumstances, such as the aftermath of strikes, whether in docks, factories or railways, involving a subsequent heavy rush of traffic to clear off arrears. Other traffic peaks may result from suddenly imposed import restrictions by overseas countries, when shippers send consignments forward in a hurry in order to clear their goods before the restrictions become effective.

9. The problem of clearing road vehicles is governed by the speed with which cargo can be received into the docks, and this in turn is governed by a whole string of factors such as the supply and mobilisation of labour, the conditions of work, the assembling, sorting and clearing of cargo through sheds, and the loading and stowing in the ships in the order necessary for the trim of the ship and for rotation of discharging ports. An even flow can only be achieved by the co-operation of all parties concerned and by dove-tailing the various operations in an orderly manner.

10. The following paragraphs describe the situation at each of the ports from which we asked for reports. We are glad to record that we have found all those concerned to be fully aware of the importance of the problem, and of the need to tackle it in accordance with local conditions. We conclude our report by referring to those matters which seem to us to be of more general application.

LONDON

Procedure in the Port

11. Cargo for export arrives in the docks either by road, rail or lighter. The Port of London Authority are responsible for the unloading of all road and rail vehicles, reception, sorting and assembly of cargoes in the sheds, and subsequent movement to ship's side, where stevedores employed by the shipowners take over and load into ship. The same stevedores also discharge direct into ship cargo arriving by lighter.

12. Shipowners notify shippers by means of their 'sailing' cards, of the names of vessels to load, the name of the dock, the number of the shed to which cargo should be delivered, and in particular the dates between which cargo will be received for shipment. In a long voyage trade, cargo may be destined for half a dozen or more different ports of discharge and the number of Bills of Lading involved for any one ship's cargo may vary between 1,200 and 1,500 or more. An adequate quantity of cargo should therefore be available within the dock at an early date, in order that the ship may commence loading cargo immediately on arriving at the berth, and there should be an even flow of cargo into the sheds in proper order so that the various shipments may be efficiently sorted and assembled throughout the period of loading.

Road Vehicle Statistics

13. The Authority have kept records of the numbers of vehicles with export goods handled in the docks and of those which have had to be turned away at night without being unloaded. Difficulties arise mostly in the Royal group of docks, though other docks, particularly Tilbury and the West India group, have also been affected at times. The following table shows the numbers involved during the four weeks ended the 29th October, 1955.

Week Ended	*No. of road vehicles unloaded*		*No. of rail trucks unloaded*	*No. of road vehicles turned away*
	Lorries	*Uncased vehicles for shipment*		
8th October	14,817	623	2,441	123
15th October	13,145	906	2,525	130
22nd October	13,845	1,437	2,108	397
29th October	14,534	1,576	2,718	183
	56,341	4,542	9,792	833

14. The reasons for turning vehicles away have been classified by the Authority under three heads, viz. :

(*a*) *Vehicles arriving late in the day* (526 vehicles).—This accounted for the greatest number not dealt with on the day of arrival, and frequently occurred in the last two or three days of the advertised receiving period. Some shippers appear to be under the mistaken impression that cargo arriving late will consequently be loaded last and discharged first.

(*b*) *Congestion in Shed* (28 vehicles).—This may be due to a ship arriving at her berth later than was expected owing to bad weather, delay in discharge of previous cargo, or delays in dry-docking, or it may be due to cargo which should have been loaded in an earlier ship being left in the shed.

(c) *Other reasons* (279 vehicles).—The unloading of 250 vehicles was prevented by heavy rain which occurred on three days during the week ended the 22nd October. The other vehicles shown under this heading either arrived after work had ceased or were carrying hazardous goods which had been sent down on the wrong day and could not be accepted.

15. The increase in the tonnage of export traffic and of the proportion handled by road vehicles is illustrated by the following figures:

1937	Total	728,813 tons	Railborne	301,824	(41 %)
			Roadborne	426,989	(59 %)
1955	Total	1,975,603 tons	Railborne	378,962	(19 %)
			Roadborne	1,596,641	(81 %)

Although the volume of goods coming to the port by rail has increased by some 25 %, road traffic has increased by nearly 275 %.

16. The docks were originally laid out for very different conditions and it is this great increase in road transport which gives rise to the existing difficulties. In addition to the volume of goods passing over the quays, an approximately equal quantity is also taken to ships by lighters and loaded over the waterside. This fact is significant in considering suggestions which have been made for saving the time of road vehicles by unloading goods into depots up-river and taking them to the ship by lighter (see paragraph 21 below).

17. The Authority receive no advance information about the amount of cargo which is being sent to any particular ship on any day. In the absence of this information the Authority engage sufficient men at the morning call to enable them to provide gangs to meet estimated requirements. Experience during the morning may, however, show that insufficient labour has been engaged and that the road vehicles are coming in faster than they can be unloaded. The Authority then seek to engage more men at the midday call, but they may not always be able to do this. When this happens some road vehicles are likely to be turned away without being unloaded at night. If the Authority knew in advance what goods would be arriving, the engagement of labour would be facilitated.

18. The heavy volume of traffic which is handled in London requires plans to be made in advance to ensure that the most efficient use is made of the available berths and other facilities. There are however limits to the extent to which the movement of ships can be accurately predicted. Ships are always at the mercy of the weather, and unforeseen events may at any time affect their date of arrival in port. If a ship is delayed, the orderly flow of goods through the quayside transit sheds becomes more difficult, and this may not only delay the unloading of road vehicles bringing cargo to the ship immediately concerned, but also interfere with the reception of cargo for the following ships as well. Over and above these causes of delay are the problems which arise out of strikes. Many of the complaints which were made during the late summer of 1955, for example, and which were reflected in the approach from the Road Haulage Association, were directly attributable to the earlier dock strike which had lasted from the 23rd May, 1955, to the 2nd July, 1955, and which caused a considerable back-log of traffic.

Shed Accommodation

19. Transit sheds on the quays are designed on the assumption that there will be a reasonably steady flow of goods through them, in from the road vehicle or railway wagon and out to the ship. They cannot hold all the cargo

for one ocean ship and if circumstances prevent the cargo being moved through continuously to the ship the shed becomes full and the unloading of vehicles is retarded.

20. The problem would be eased if sheds were larger, but we realise that at some berths enlargement of the sheds may be physically impossible. The economic justification must also be taken into account ; the additional overhead costs of a larger shed represent an addition to the costs of handling cargo through the port. Nevertheless the improvement of shed accommodation within the limitations set out above, is in our opinion a necessity. The Authority have since the war done a great deal to improve shed accommodation, and have recently joined two existing sheds on one of their quays to provide a large unloading bay which will permit seventeen road vehicles to unload simultaneously under cover clear of the main dock roadway. It is intended to use fork-lift trucks in the combined shed. If these arrangements are successful they will be applied to other berths.

Use of Depots for Full Loads

21. The suggestion has been made that depots should be provided outside the docks at which goods carried by road vehicles could be left for despatch to the ship by rail, road or water. A depot is available for the reception of road traffic for onward conveyance by rail to Tilbury. This method however involves double handling, and so far as onward conveyance by water is concerned, would not be practicable in many cases because there is usually no more room for additional craft on the waterside of the ship.

Bulking of Small Consignments

22. A census which was taken by the Authority of vehicles owned by road hauliers (other than British Road Services) and by traders, showed that many carried less than full loads. With a view to expediting the unloading of small lots and reducing the number of vehicles at the ship berths, the Authority have already provided depots at the Royal Docks and India and Millwall Docks for the reception of small consignments up to a total weight of 20 cwts. The Authority undertake to sort these consignments to ships and destination ports and to transfer them to the loading berth in time for shipment. A charge of from 5/- to 10/- is made for this facility. Many instances occur where drivers are either unaware of the facility or possibly unauthorised by their employers to use it, and wait their turn at the export shed even though this may involve considerable delay. These facilities should be more widely known to shippers and hauliers. Greater use should be made of them and drivers should be instructed accordingly. B.R.S. (Parcels) Limited which handles a large volume of traffic in lots of under one ton for export in London has a depot outside the docks where the consignments are sorted and bulked to make full lorry loads for individual ships. British Road Services general services, and the independent hauliers, should also endeavour to provide depots in or near the dock areas for bulking small consignments.

Use of Rail

23. There are many factors which have led to the development of road transport for the conveyance of export goods, but the economic cost involved in keeping a road vehicle waiting to unload is greater than that incurred with a railway wagon, since a road vehicle has to be manned and is itself a prime mover. If a port becomes congested a rail wagon can more easily be held under load outside the port. A swing back from road to rail transport would materially help to ease the problem and we are glad to learn that British Railways now once more offer a " Green Arrow " service, for full wagon loads of

export cargo, which gives a guaranteed date of delivery at the port. We suggest that the reintroduction of this service should be more widely advertised amongst exporters and that they and British Railways should explore the possibilities of small lots being bulked at the larger sending stations in the Midlands and elsewhere so as to make full wagon loads for individual ships.

Overtime Working

24. We feel that the position would be materially eased if longer overtime could be worked to clear road vehicles. Overtime is already worked for this purpose up to 7 p.m. It is not easy to arrange the working of overtime after 7 p.m. by men who have already worked a full shift, but additional hours are worked on occasion, we understand, when it is necessary to enable a ship to catch a tide. It would be an advantage if this could be done on occasion to clear accumulations of road vehicles, and we recommend this matter to the consideration of the local Joint Committee.

Time of Arrival of Vehicles

25. Road vehicles tend to arrive at the docks late in the day. The unloading of vehicles arriving late is often delayed, and numbers of such vehicles are sent away without being dealt with. Many factors influence the time of day at which a lorry arrives at the docks and it may often be impossible to avoid late arrival. Nevertheless, we feel that there is room for some control of the time of arrival.

Radio Control of Vehicles

26. British Road Services have recently introduced into the London docks a scheme for the control of their vehicles by radio, which has already been operated successfully for nearly three years at Liverpool and Birkenhead. Information from two light vans fitted with radio which patrol the docks is sent to a caravan control office near the main gate of the West India Docks enabling vehicles to be ordered into and out of the docks to suit the acceptance and despatch of cargo at the various berths. Empty vehicles in the docks can also be given fresh assignments without having to return to the depot for instructions. This system helps to ensure an orderly flow of vehicles though its use is, of course, confined to vehicles under one control.

Regulation of Flow of Cargo

27. The greatest hope for reducing delays and avoiding congestion lies, we think, in the introduction of arrangements for regulating the flow of cargo into the docks. To be successful such arrangements must depend upon the co-operation of several interests ; the shipowners (in this case liner companies) calling the cargo forward, the shippers forwarding the cargo, the Authority, road hauliers and British Railways. Regulatory schemes require a measure of discipline, and this may be irksome where there is competition between shipowners in the service they give to shippers, and between shippers in securing the accommodation they require. If successful arrangements are to be introduced all the lines operating on a particular route should conform to the requirements of any agreed scheme.

28. We recommend that Shipping Conferences, shippers and the Authority, working as necessary through the Port Operations Panel and the Port Users' Committee, should co-operate in the preparation of schemes for regulating the calling forward of traffic on a voluntary basis. An essential part of any such schemes would be that the cargo booked for any particular ship should not exceed the capacity of the ship. Cargo could be regulated in times of congestion, but the schemes should be so framed as to ensure that the volume of

goods handled through the port is maintained and that ships are not kept waiting for cargo. They should also provide that the reception of cargo is spread over the whole receiving period. Staggered dates should be notified to shippers, and should be adhered to strictly, subject to special arrangements to meet particular difficulties of individual consignors.

29. Schemes of this kind have been tried out by individual lines and after teething troubles have proved successful. We feel that industry may now be ready to accept the need for regulatory schemes and as evidence of this we have been glad to learn that other lines have recently decided to introduce staggered closing dates for the reception of cargo.

LIVERPOOL

Procedure in the Port

30. Cargo is received in Liverpool and Birkenhead by the shipowners. Road transport proceeds to the appropriate dock shed alongside the loading berth and the driver deposits his papers with the ship's wharfinger immediately on arrival. The shed floors are level with the roadway and if there is room the vehicle is called forward immediately into the shed and the goods unloaded by the driver and second man at the appropriate stowages for the port of destination. If the goods are too heavy to be handled by the men on the vehicle it is usual for the wharfinger to provide cranage free of charge. If the goods cannot be accepted at once, the driver returns to his vehicle after having deposited his papers and waits until the wharfinger calls him forward. On completion of unloading, the wharfinger gives the driver a receipt for the goods. From then onwards the goods are handled and loaded by the stevedore on behalf of the shipowner.

Road Vehicles Statistics

31. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board conducted a census from the 1st to the 15th September, 1955, of road vehicles proceeding to foreign loading berths in Liverpool and Birkenhead. The results are shown in the following table which also shows a comparison with a similar census taken in 1950. The 1955 census covers about 32,000 vehicles. (These figures include vehicles for shipment).

	Up to and including 1 hour	Over 1 hour & up to 2 hours	Over 2 and up to 3 hours	Over 3 and up to 4 hours	Over 4 and up to 5 hours	Over 5 and up to 6 hours	Over 6 and up to 7 hours	Over 7 and up to 8 hours	Over 8 and up to 9 hours	Over 9 hours
	Period between vehicle joining queue or reporting to Wharfinger and commencement of lightening									
No. of Vehicles	22,951	4,957	2,448	1,175	483	195	60	31	8	2
% ..	71.03	15.34	7.58	3.64	1.49	.6	.18	.1	.03	.01
	Period between vehicle joining queue or reporting to Wharfinger and completion of lightening									
No. of Vehicles	16,984	7,860	3,776	1,902	808	364	119	53	32	7
% ..	53.23	24.64	11.84	5.96	2.53	1.14	.37	.17	.1	.02
	Comparison between 1955 Census and that taken in 1950 Period between joining queue or reporting to Wharfinger and completion of lightening									
Census										
1955	53.23	24.64	11.84	5.96	2.53	1.14	.37	.17	.1	.02
1950	59.82	22.9	9,24	4.23	2.21	1.0	.44	.12	.03	,01

Vehicles not discharged on day of arrival represent less than one fifth of one per cent, and many did not arrive at the docks until late afternoon. The problem does not appear to us to be quite so serious as in London, but in so far as it exists, it arises mainly from the increase in total volume of export traffic and in the proportion which arrives by road. This is illustrated by the following figures.

YEAR	*Exports Foreign passing through Liverpool and Birkenhead*			
	Tonnage		*Percentage*	
	By Road	*By Rail*	*By Road*	*By Rail*
1947	1,873,800	465,800	80.1	19.9
1950	3,130,900	756,300	80.5	19.5
1954	3,169,700	559,600	85.0	15.0

These figures exclude the small percentage of traffic arriving by coaster or by barge. Comparative figures for a pre-war period are not available but we understand that a very marked increase in the use of road transport has taken place since then.

Permit Scheme for Export Cargoes

32. There are many features of port working in Liverpool and Birkenhead which differ from those in London. Apart from the different arrangements for the reception of export cargo, a permit scheme is operated. This we understand evolved from a system of control introduced during the war. At present the procedure adopted by shipowners is :

(*a*) to indicate specific dates for heavy lifts, perishable, hazardous or deck cargo, goods to be loaded overside, vehicles or other special loads ;

(*b*) to indicate special dates or an actual date for reception of large consignments ;

(*c*) as regards deep port cargo, either to indicate specific dates or to ask for certain goods to be tendered first where similar cargo is going to a number of ports ;

(*d*) in many other cases to indicate specific dates or block dates ;

(*e*) in other cases to receive cargo as tendered.

Cargo tendered out of date is accepted unless special circumstances make this impossible. While this system is of material assistance, we feel it could be made more effective.

33. The Conference Lines in Liverpool have recently issued an appeal to shippers and others to spread their deliveries evenly over the ship's receiving period. We endorse this appeal and urge that shippers should co-operate.

Radio Control of Vehicles

34. As already noted above, British Road Services have, for nearly three years, been operating a scheme for the control of their vehicles in the Liverpool and Birkenhead Docks and it has proved successful.

Shed Accommodation

35. We are glad to note that the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, in consultation with the Liverpool Steam Ship Owners' Association and others

concerned are giving consideration to the further steps which can be taken to avoid delays. The Board have particularly in mind the effects of congestion in the sheds. They are taking steps to secure an improved use of the existing facilities, so as to reduce the employment of sheds as stores while awaiting disposal instructions. The Board have in hand a considerable programme of new shed construction which will materially assist in dealing with cargo. At Alexandra Dock a large new shed is being built to replace one destroyed during the war. The Board's scheme of reconstruction of the Canada-Langton Docks, on which work is well advanced, includes the provision of new quays and sheds on the west sides of Langton, Brocklebank and Canada Docks. The sheds in the Canada and Langton Docks will be of two storeys. In Huskisson Docks two large new sheds are under construction, and considerable progress has been made with a new shed at Bramley-Moore Dock. Reconstruction and improvement of other sheds is being carried out at Brocklebank, Queens No. 1, Gladstone and Brunswick Docks.

MANCHESTER

36. At Manchester the work of receiving the cargo into the sheds is done by the Manchester Ship Canal Company on behalf of the shipowner. The Canal Company also sort the cargo, take it out to the quay for loading and load it into the ship, again on behalf of the shipowner.

37. A survey of road vehicles delivering export traffic to Manchester was carried out by the Port Operations Panel from the 29th August to the 20th September, 1955, and this was followed by a more detailed survey of the sequence of events at one particular shed used for export cargoes during the period 2nd to 20th January, 1956, when the loading of three ships sailing on a weekly schedule was observed.

38. During the 29 days covered by the first survey 2,470 vehicles arrived in the port. The average time spent waiting to start to unload was a little over 100 minutes; the average unloading time was nearly 23 minutes; and fourteen vehicles, or 0.56% of the total left the docks without being unloaded, for return the next day. The analysis of the waiting time is as follows:

Waiting Periods	1 *hour*	2 *hours*	3 *hours*	4 *hours*	5 *hours*	6 *hours*	7 *hours*	8 *hours*
No. of Vehicles ..	1,004	715	331	196	119	72	19	14
% of Total ..	40.6	28.9	13.4	7.9	4.8	3	.8	.6

39. The Port Operations Panel have had the matter of road vehicle delays under study for some time, and shipping lines using the Port of Manchester are associated with the appeal to shippers referred to in paragraph 33 above, to spread their deliveries evenly over the whole receiving period. The Canal Company are widening some of the roads in the docks and improving parking facilities for road vehicles to make easier the systematic queueing and calling-on of vehicles.

40. During the second survey a number of points with a considerable bearing on the problem of delays to road vehicles came to the notice of the Panel. The first is the extent to which deliveries of cargo are delayed until the end of the weekly receiving period. This is illustrated by the following tables:

	Vehicle arrivals % of Total	*Tonnage % of Total*
SHIP "A"		
Cargo shut out from previous vessel and arriving prior to official receiving period	15.07	14.38
Saturday, Monday, Tuesday	25.83	30.71
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday ..	59.10	54.91
	100.00	100.00
SHIP "B"		
Cargo shut out from previous vessel and arriving prior to official receiving period	7.20	6.66
Saturday, Monday, Tuesday	23.92	25.48
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday ..	68.88	67.86
	100.00	100.00

41. The effect on road vehicle waiting times of the concentration of deliveries during the last three days of the receiving period is shown by the following tables :

	Vehicle Arrivals % of Total	*Tonnage % of Total*	*Average Waiting time—Minutes*
SHIP "A"			
Pre-receiving period ..	15.07	14.38	131.91
Saturday	5.03	8.38	65.40
Monday	9.36	13.38	76.20
Tuesday	11.44	8.95	57.39
Wednesday	19.58	20.65	142.60
Thursday	25.30	27.03	153.60
Friday	14.22	7.23	216.15
SHIP "B"			
Pre-receiving period ..	7.20	6.66	234.91
Saturday	2.02	3.79	39.14
Monday	10.66	9.84	40.43
Tuesday	11.24	11.85	49.28
Wednesday	23.34	27.55	62.90
Thursday	29.11	20.31	82.49
Friday	16.43	20.00	110.60

42. Apart from the obvious difficulties caused by the additional numbers of vehicles to be unloaded towards the end of the receiving period, a further cause of delay at that time is that the loading of the ship is then beginning and there is consequently the greatest demand for mechanical equipment to

load the heavier cargo stowed at this stage. On these occasions the ship has to be given priority and this unavoidably causes some delay in the unloading of road vehicles.

43. It was found that a number of drivers, particularly those employed by small firms, were under the impression that some saving of quay rent would be ensured by late delivery. This is not so; no quay rent is charged against the shipper for export goods.

44. The transit building at the berth at which the survey was made has four floors, different types of goods being allocated to each floor. In order to avoid gangs having to move unnecessarily from floor to floor and to change equipment, lorries are dealt with not in strict order of arrival, but are selected from the queue out of turn according to their load, thus ensuring a high degree of continuity in the working of each gang and keeping to a minimum the number of changes necessary.

45. As a result of their survey the Port Operations Panel consider that the time needed to unload a road vehicle could be considerably reduced if more attention were paid to the packaging of goods and if they were loaded on the lorries with regard to the requirements at the unloading end. The Panel suggest that it would be advantageous if crated traffic could be fitted with skids to facilitate the use of fork lift equipment. We feel that the results of the Manchester surveys, which go into more detail than would be appropriate for this report, could with advantage be published for study by those concerned with the problem.

GLASGOW

46. Statistics relating to delays to road vehicles at Glasgow are not available. We understand, however, from the Port Transport Executive (which discharges in Glasgow the functions of an Operations Panel) that delays to road vehicles rarely occur.

SOUTHAMPTON

47. At Southampton the British Transport Commission are responsible for unloading goods from road vehicles on to the shed floor, sorting them and taking them out to the quay for loading into the ship on behalf of the shipper. The shipowners are responsible for the loading into the ship. The problem of delays to road vehicles is confined to export traffic for South Africa. It only arises in very exceptional circumstances and affects one berth out of the many in the port. The last occasion when difficulty was experienced was in June and July, 1955, when the announcement by the South African Government of impending import restrictions into that country coincided with a dock strike in London. As a result, exporters from all over the country despatched large quantities of goods by rail and road without previous notice to the Shipping Company and without booking space, in the hope that they would secure shipment. The traffic was far beyond the capacity of the shipping space available and after the weekly mail vessel had sailed, fully laden, thousands of tons of goods remained in the transit shed and as many as 1,100 loaded railway wagons were in the docks awaiting shipment. Records maintained at Southampton show that between the 1st September, 1955 and the 17th November, 1955, the only occasions on which road vehicles were detained overnight were as follows:

Date	*No. of road vehicles detained*
September 23rd	3
October 1st	13
3rd	1
4th	6
10th	9
24th	6
November 7th	9
8th	2
14th	12

In most of the above instances the road vehicles arrived late in the afternoon and they were unloaded before midday the following day. No vehicles were detained overnight in December, 1955, or January, 1956.

48. In the light of the experience of June and July last, as described above, the British Transport Commission proposed to the Shipping Company that a system of control should be evolved which could be introduced on any future occasion when it might become necessary, so that goods would not be sent for shipment in quantities greatly in excess of the freight capacity available. The Shipping Company pointed out, however, that any such system would be ineffective if exporters did not conform with booking arrangements and sent large quantities of goods unannounced and in excess of the shipping space which could be provided.

OTHER MATTERS OF GENERAL APPLICATION

Conveyor Belts

49. We have considered the suggestion that the use of conveyor belts in sheds might speed up the handling of cargo and the discharge of vehicles, but we feel that their application is limited so far as general export goods are concerned because of the various sizes and weights of packages which are liable to be encountered.

Segregation of Vehicles

50. We have also considered whether the turn-round of vehicles would be improved if they were segregated into two queues at each export berth, one for those with full loads, and one for those with small consignments. We have concluded, however, that this would not be practicable for general application.

H.M. Customs and Excise

51. It has been suggested that Customs requirements may in some cases contribute to delays to road vehicles ; we can, however, find no evidence that this is a material factor. Where delays do occur, this is frequently due to some omission or delay in the documentary procedures on the part of consignors. Unnecessary delays would be avoided if the clerical procedures connected with Customs documentation were always correctly carried out before goods were sent to the docks.

REPRESENTATION OF ROAD HAULAGE INTERESTS

52. The letter from the Road Haulage Association raises the question of the representation of road haulage interests on Port Operations Panels. The present practice is not uniform ; in Glasgow, for example, we understand road hauliers are represented on the Port Transport Executive. In other ports road hauliers are not included on the Panels themselves, but we understand that both Panels and Port Users' Committees have in fact brought the representatives of hauliers into consultation on many occasions when matters which concern them are under discussion. We feel it is right that this should be so, and we recommend that this practice should be adopted generally.

DECENTRALISATION OF EXPORT TRAFFIC

53. In this report the Committee has confined its attention to the question of delays to export traffic conveyed by road to London, Liverpool, Manchester and Southampton, and has not dealt with the question of making greater use of other ports which have accommodation for vessels employed in overseas trade, are geographically convenient for the conveyance of the goods by rail or road from the manufacturing centres, and are, in existing conditions, under-employed for lengthy periods. In that problem there are many factors which concern exporters, shipowners, rail and road transport and port authorities. One of such factors is that the throughout expenses incurred by shippers should be reasonably equal to all the ports concerned. It is considered that this matter should be dealt with as a separate problem and not embodied in this report which has a limited objective. In the meantime, however, it is noted that in connection with the South Wales ports in particular, discussions are proceeding between the Chamber of Shipping, Liverpool Steam Ship Owners' Association, the Industrial Association of Wales and Monmouthshire and the British Transport Commission.

CONCLUSIONS AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

54. Road vehicles delivering export cargoes are subject to delay in some ports in certain circumstances. Although only a small percentage of the vehicles are held up, the delays in total present a serious problem. This is appreciated by the authorities in the ports concerned and remedies are being sought by the Port Operations Panels and in discussions between the interests concerned. Delays to vehicles are a consequence of congestion in the handling of goods through the ports, and measures which will strike at the causes of delays to vehicles must be those which will strike at the causes of congestion and will ensure an even flow of goods.

55. Vehicles are delayed when more traffic arrives in the dock area than the sheds and the labour employed at the time are capable of handling, or the ship capable of receiving. We recommend the adoption of two courses to meet the problem in the ports where it arises. The first is to increase the available shed accommodation. This can be done by building bigger sheds where this is physically possible and economically justifiable, and by improving the lay-out of sheds and working methods.

56. The second course, to which we attach great importance, is to introduce regulatory schemes whereby:

(i) all those responsible for the handling of traffic can be aware from day to day of the cargo expected to arrive;

(ii) dates for the reception of cargo are staggered so that the goods to be loaded first arrive at the beginning of the reception period, and are followed by those to be loaded later;

(iii) the unnecessary peaks which at present occur at the end of a receiving period are avoided.

Only in abnormal conditions would it be necessary to hold traffic back and any scheme would need to be worked so that the maximum flow of traffic was maintained, and there was no risk of wasting ships' time or space because cargo was not available. In Liverpool arrangements are in operation which meet some of the needs of the situation, but they are capable of improvement; in Manchester a scheme would be advantageous. It is, however, in London that there is the greatest need and we recommend to the shipowners and shippers, on whom the responsibility primarily rests, that they should introduce regulatory schemes as soon as possible.

57. Other measures of general application which we recommend are :

(i) a more extensive use of rail transport for export cargoes ; we feel that many shippers of goods could with advantage review their practice in this matter, now that the " Green Arrow " service has been restored ;

(ii) the creation of depots by road hauliers at which small consignments of export goods can be 'bulked' so as to reduce the numbers of vehicles waiting in dock areas.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE

58. We propose to keep ourselves informed as to improvements in shed accommodation at the ports mentioned above, and as to progress in the making of arrangements for regulating the calling forward of cargoes, not only in relation to the reduction of delays to road vehicles, but because we feel that measures of this kind can improve the turn-round of shipping, which is of vital national importance. We propose also to turn our attention to delays in the discharge of grain cargoes, and will report upon the subject in due course.

We are, Sir,

Your obedient Servants,

(*Signed*) E. H. MURRANT (*Chairman*)
LESLIE E. FORD
ROBERT LETCH
P. ERIC MILLBOURN
M. ARNET ROBINSON
THOS. YATES

R. R. GOODISON (*Secretary*)

April, 1956.

APPENDIX I

COPY OF LETTER FROM THE ROAD HAULAGE ASSOCIATION LIMITED DATED 26th SEPTEMBER, 1955, TO THE COMMITTEE

On 22nd September a Conference was held in London to discuss the problem of the delays that occur to road vehicles engaged in the carriage of goods to and from docks. The Conference was attended by representatives of the following organisations :

Chamber of Shipping
Institute of Shipping and Forwarding Agents
Association of Public Wharfingers Limited
Federation of London Public Wharfingers Limited
Dock and Harbour Authorities' Association
British Transport Commission
Federation of British Industries
Association of British Chambers of Commerce
National Union of Manufacturers
Traders Road Transport Association
National Association of Port Employers
Liverpool Steam Ship Owners' Association
Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders
Timber Trade Federation
General Electric Company Limited
British Association of Overseas Furniture Removers
London Chamber of Commerce
Road Haulage Association.

Reports were received of the causes of the delays which created unnecessary inconvenience and expense to manufacturers and industrialists and those of our members who are engaged in haulage operations at the docks. It was appreciated by the Conference that to these serious problems there were both short and long term solutions which could best be dealt with by local investigation.

The Conference, informed of the functions of the local Port Operations Panels, considered that the machinery of those bodies or their counterparts should be fully utilised to secure immediate improvement in the organisation and facilities at the docks. At the instance of the Conference I am therefore to request that your Committee should take immediate steps to urge the local Panels to use their utmost endeavours to secure prompt and permanent reduction in port delays.

It was also urged by the Conference that through the Area organisation of the Road Haulage Association approaches might be made for representation on the local Panels to be extended to road hauliers who, it was recognised, play an important part in the carriage of goods to and from the docks. Action is being taken by this office to advise our members to make such approaches.

APPENDIX II

NOTE ON MATTERS RAISED IN EARLIER REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEE

Capital Investment and Steel Supplies

In our first report we referred to the handicaps which were being suffered by the ports, and by London and Liverpool in particular, through lack of steel for their programmes of post-war rehabilitation. Steel was in short supply at that time and we recommended that a special ad hoc allocation should be made to the Ministry of Transport to enable a number of important rebuilding schemes, which were specified in the report, to proceed. This special allocation was granted and was used by the two port authorities for speeding up this work, and as a result many berths were brought into operation more rapidly than would otherwise have been possible.

In paragraph 18 of our second report we drew attention to a shortage of warehouse and storage capacity in the ports which was having an adverse effect on shipping turn-round and in Appendix II to the report we gave particulars of a number of building projects which we considered worthy of priority in order to ease this situation. Al these projects were at that time being held up either through lack of steel or the restriction of capital investment. Certain of these schemes were ultimately deferred, revised, or withdrawn, but all the schemes with which it was desired to proceed were put in hand, and the majority have now been completed. Control of the distribution of steel was abolished in 1953, and building controls in 1954.

We referred in paragraph 19 of our second report to the useful contribution which could be made to the speedier turn-round of grain ships by an increase in milling capacity at the ports, and with this in view we recommended that work should go ahead as quickly as possible on the construction of certain mills in London, Manchester, Hull and Leith. All these mills are now in operation.

Mechanisation

We referred in paragraph 21 of our second report to the slow rate at which mechanisation was being introduced at the ports. Since then considerable progress has been made with the introduction of mechanical equipment for handling bulk cargoes, such as ores, sugar and grain, and in many ports an improvement has also taken place in the extent to which mechanical equipment is used for handling general cargo. It is in the handling of general cargo that there is still the greatest scope for improvement, and we hope that it will be possible, by making use of the existing joint negotiating machinery in the ports, for agreement to be reached between representatives of employers and of the men for the further improvement of port efficiency by the progressive introduction of mechanical equipment where this can usefully be employed. In this connection we have been pleased to note the statement issued by the National Joint Council for the Port Transport Industry when announcing the new national agreement on wages on the 13th March, 1956, regarding the need for local Joint Committees to study all practicable measures to achieve full efficiency. We hope that the appeal contained in this statement will meet with a wide response.

Statistics of Shipping Turn-Round and Cargo Handling

In paragraph 22 of our second report we referred to the discussions taking place between the interests concerned regarding the compilation of statistics of shipping turn-round and cargo handling, and expressed appreciation of the progress which was being made.

The negotiations were brought to a satisfactory conclusion and quarterly returns are now being rendered in respect of the main ports. These returns began on the 1st October, 1953. They are limited to foreign trade dry cargo vessels, and are submitted to the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation through a joint committee of the Chamber of Shipping, the Dock and Harbour Authorities' Association, the Docks Division of the British Transport Commission, the Liverpool Steam Ship Owners' Association and the National Association of Port Employers.

It will be necessary to receive returns covering a period before any useful study of them can be made.

Lighterage in London

We drew attention in paragraph 23 of our second report to the difficulties caused in the Port of London by the seasonal shortage of lightermen. We understand that this shortage still persists, particularly during the timber season when there is a heavy demand for lighters. The problem has received considerable attention from those concerned in the Port of London, and we hope that it will eventually be possible for satisfactory arrangements to be made to overcome the present difficulties.

Road and Rail Facilities

We referred in paragraph 25 of our second report to four schemes for improving road and rail facilities at major ports. The position on these schemes is as follows:—

Manchester Ship Canal : Provision of additional railway sidings at Ellesmere Port

The necessary filling work is nearing completion.

Middlesbrough : Provision of new access road

At Middlesbrough the British Transport Commission have recently completed a major scheme of reconstruction and improvements which includes the recommended provision of better road access to the dock area.

Glasgow : Whiteinch-Linthouse Tunnel

The Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation authorised the construction of the first tunnel on the 4th March, 1955, and detailed planning is proceeding. The Minister announced in the House of Commons on the 2nd February, 1955, that the second tunnel would be authorised in the period 1956/7 to 1958/9.

Tilbury : New approach road

The Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation announced in the House of Commons on the 2nd February, 1955, that this scheme would be authorised in the period 1956/7 to 1958/9.

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